DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 152 JC 900 545

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TITLE Fall 1989-Spring 1990 Retention Analysis. Enrollment Analysis EA91-3.
INSTITUTION Prince George's Community Coll., Largo, MD. Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; College Freshmen; Community Colleges; *Dropouts; *Enrollment Influences; Majors (Students); School Holding Power; *Student Attrition; Student Characteristics; Student Educational Objectives; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students; Withdrawal (Education)

ABSTRACT

Fall-to-spring retention rates were calculated at Prince George's Community College (PGCC) for several demographic groups and for first-time students attending the college in fall 1989. Data from longitudinal studies were included to provide a more complete picture of student persistence at PGCC. Study findings included the following: (1) 60% of all students enrolled in fall 1989 returned in spring 1990, including 77% of the full-time students and 54% of the part-timers; (2) degree-seeking students had a higher retention rate (77%) than non-degree-seeking students (54%); (3) students attending only day classes had a higher retention rate (66%) than those attending only night classes (50%), but a lower rate of retention than those attending both day and night classes (73%); (4) first-time students had a lower retention rate (61%) than continuing students (68%), but a higher rate than transfer students (48%); (5) first-time students whose reason for attending PGCC was to prepare for transfer had the highest retention rate (70%), while those attending to update job skills had the lowest (37%); (6) males and females returned at approximately the same rate (59% vs 60%); (7) retention rates were 69% for Asian students, 61% for White students, 59% for Native Americans, and 58% for both Black and Hispanic students; (8) students under 21 years of age and over 59 had the highest rates of retention (68% and 63%, respectively); (9) the Radiography, Nursing, and Hotel Management Certificate programs had retention rates over 70%; and (10) the top reasons for discontinuing study were employment demands, insufficient time, financial reasons, transfer to another college, change in family situation, and achievement of goals. (GFW)

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FALL 1989 - SPRING 1990
RETENTION ANALYSIS

Craig A. Clagett

PRINCE GEORGE'S
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Enrollment Analysis EA91-3

prepared by the
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

FALL 1989-SPRING 1990 RETENTION ANALYSIS
Enrollment Analysis Report EA91-3
August 1990

Introduction

The college has had several programs aimed at improving the retention of targeted groups of students. Faculty advising for "at-risk" students, mentors for black students, special tutoring and methods of instruction for students experiencing difficulty in certain programs, and special assistance for academically disadvantaged or handicapped students in vocational-technical curricula, are a few of the programs implemented in recent years. To support these efforts, and those of a collegewide task force on retention established by the President, the institutional research office initiated a series of retention studies in 1986. These have included studies of course pass rates and term-to-term retention, as well as longitudinal student persistence studies. This report provides the latest update of fall-to-spring retention rates for selected student groups.

Methodology and Limitations

Fall-to-spring retention rates reflect spring returnees as a percentage of official, end-of-semester fall enrollment, less December graduates. Fall-to-spring retention was examined for several demographic groups, sorted by variables on the student information system. The analysis identified differences among groups but did not lend itself to "explaining" student decisions to continue or not. Many variables plausibly related to retention, such as academic background, peer or family support, and student study habits, were not available for analysis. Studies in the literature suggest that demographic variables are not significantly related to retention and attrition when academic background variables are controlled for.

The results reported below are limited to presenting retention rates for various student groups. Multivariate analysis would be necessary to ascertain the relative contribution of different factors affecting student decisions to continue their studies. Nearly a third of the college's students exhibit "stop-in/stop-out" behavior; this focus on fall-to-spring retention will be supplemented with longitudinal studies to provide a more complete picture of student persistence at PGCC.

Retention Rates by Student Attendance Variables

Three of every five students enrolled in the fall returned to continue their studies in the spring. Full-time students, those enrolled in degree programs, and day students were more likely to continue than part-time students, non-degree-seeking students, and evening students. Students who attended classes at Largo were more likely to return than those exclusively enrolled at extension locations. These patterns have held true for all five years examined (1985-86 through 1989-90). The figures for Fall 1989 to Spring 1990 were as follows:

Fall 1989 - Spring 1990 Retention
by Student Attendance Variables

	Enrolled Fall 89	Returned Spring 90	Retention Rate
Total	13,389	7,975	60%
Full-time	3,363	2,582	77%
Part-time	10,026	5,393	54%
Degree-seeking	11,374	7,229	64%
Non-degree-seeking	2,015	746	37%
Day classes only	6,007	3,951	66%
Evening only	5,926	2,955	50%
Both day and evening	1,456	1,069	73%
Largo campus only	10,105	6,259	62%
Extension only	2,338	1,071	46%
Both on/off campus	946	645	68%

A group of special interest was students enrolling in college for the first time in Fall 1989. Analyses of course pass rates have consistently found that first-time students earn lower pass rates than continuing students. Similarly, first-time Fall 1989 students had a fall-to-spring retention rate (61 percent) below that of Fall 1989 students who were continuing from the prior spring (68 percent returned in Spring 1990). New transfers to PGCC from other colleges had a lower retention rate, 48 percent. Lowest was the Fall 1989-Spring 1990 retention of students readmitted to PGCC in Fall 1989, 44 percent. Retention for first-time students in Fall 1989 is displayed at the top of the next page. First-timers whose reason for attending PGCC was preparation for transfer had the highest retention rate; those at PGCC for enrichment or to update job skills, the lowest:

Fall 1989 - Spring 1990 Retention
of First-time College Students

	Fall 89	Returned	Rate
Full-time	1,216	964	79%
Part-time	1,751	852	49
A.A. goal	1,481	1,002	68%
Certif. goal	528	293	55
Courses only	938	505	54
Transfer prep.	1,667	1,169	70%
Career entry	414	238	57
Explore options	365	188	52
Enrichment	238	111	47
Job skill update	252	92	37
Total first-time	2,967	1,816	61%

(missing cases excluded)

Retention Rates by Student Demographic Variables

Young students and senior citizens had higher fall-to-spring retention rates than students in their twenties, thirties, forties, or fifties. Asian students returned at a higher rate than other racial/ethnic groups. Retention was not related to student gender. Fall-to-spring retention rates for 1989-90 by demographic groups were as follows:

Fall 1989 - Spring 1990 Retention
by Student Demographic Variables

	Fall 89	Spring 90	Rate
Female	8,291	4,959	60%
Male	5,098	3,016	59%
Asian	642	440	69%
Black	6,256	3,601	58%
Hispanic	311	179	58%
Native American	59	35	59%
White	6,121	3,720	61%
Under age 21	4,108	2,795	68%
21 - 25	3,369	1,915	57%
26 - 35	3,185	1,747	55%
36 - 59	2,283	1,240	54%
60 and over	444	278	63%

Course pass rate analyses have found that young, black males have consistently achieved passing grades at a group rate substantially below the college average. For example, black males under age 21 had a Fall 1989 pass rate of 60 percent, compared to the collegewide rate of 75 percent (see OIRA report EA91-1). Are these differences reflected in term-to-term persistence? To examine this issue, retention rates were calculated for men and women separately for each racial group:

Trends in Fall-to-spring Retention,
by Gender and Race, 1985-90

	F85-S86	F86-S87	F87-S88	F88-S89	F89-S90
Male Students					
Asian	70%	63%	64%	66%	63%
Black	57	57	56	57	56
Hispanic	59	60	60	63	62
White	61	62	60	62	61
Female Students					
Asian	66%	69%	68%	62%	74%
Black	59	58	58	58	58
Hispanic	59	54	63	67	54
White	60	61	60	63	61
Collegewide	60%	60%	59%	60%	60%

Fall-to-spring Retention by Program

Fall-to-spring retention varied by student choice of program. (Nonmatriculated students, who had not identified a certificate or degree program goal, had the lowest retention rate--37 percent.) The highest and lowest rates were:

Fall 1989 - Spring 1990 Retention Rates by Student Program
Programs with at least 25 Majors in Fall 1989

Five Highest Retention Rates	Enrolled Fall 89	Returned	Five Lowest Retention Rates	Enrolled Fall 89	Returned
Radiography	35	94%	Paralegal Cert.	34	53%
Nursing	254	76%	Paralegal A.A.	163	56%
Hotel Mgt. Cert.	29	76%	Hosp. Serv. Mgt.	50	56%
Drafting	64	70%	Gen. Bus. Educ.	39	56%
Nursing pet.	496	70%	Med. Rec. Tech.	45	58%

Reasons for Not Continuing

Why do two-fifths of the college's fall students not return for classes the following spring? To answer this question, in April 1988 the research office conducted a telephone survey of Fall 1987 students who did not return the following spring. A total of 343 students were interviewed. The top six reasons for discontinuing study at the community college were as follows:

Reasons for Not Returning to PGCC
Telephone Survey of Fall 1987 Students
Who Did Not Return in Spring 1988
(Total 343 Respondents)

	Percent of Respondents
Employment demands	39%
Insufficient time	31
Financial reasons	18
Transferred to another college	14
Change in family situation	14
Goal achieved	13

(Percentages total more than 100 since multiple responses were permitted.)

Four in ten discontinued their studies due to employment demands. Nearly a third said that a lack of time prevented them from continuing. One in every eight students did not return because they had achieved their goal at PGCC; a similar proportion had transferred to a four-year college or university. One-eighth also cited a change in family situation necessitated a stop to their studies. (These reasons may overlap since respondents in some cases cited more than one "major" reason for stopping their studies.) What is notable about these responses is that they have little to do with the college, its services, and the students' experiences at PGCC. When asked if the college could have done anything to have influenced them to return, more than 80 percent said no. Those that said yes cited course availability and scheduling difficulties and lack of financial aid for part-time students, among assorted other factors. Eighty-five percent of the respondents said they planned to return to PGCC. For details, see OIRA report EA88-8.

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